
Question Time: How Can we Stand Firm? --- by Elder Don Thomas

“Let your light so shine...”

Each of us, those called to the Priesthood and those called to the office of Member, has been commissioned to take the love of Jesus Christ and allow it to shine through us into the darkness of a world which either does not know or is actively rebelling against Him. Such darkness may be found within the walls of the Church of Jesus Christ, Oak Grove Restoration Branch, the Center Place Restoration School, or in the heart of the best reunion one ever remembers attending. If this is true, how can one possibly hope to stand firm and shine brightly when cut off or isolated from “the body?”

Having lived in Japan, Washington, and now Germany, my family and I have had to address this question and confront ourselves as we have evaluated how well we were allowing the Light of Christ to shine through us. Occasionally the question has had to be asked and honestly answered, “Have I given time and place for Christ to reside in and shine through my life?” Repentance and reevaluation of priorities has been the answer more than once. We have also observed that isolation can lead to extremes and at times with almost bizarre twists. So in addition to standing firm and shining brightly, how does one remain centered in the straight and narrow path?

More than any other place we have lived, Germany’s humanism and rejection of modesty have presented challenges, if not outright attacks, to the principles of purity and virtue. Job’s covenant which he made with his eyes in Job 31:1 has taken on greater significance. With such values engrained in the German people, it can become quite a challenge to discuss even the basics of the Gospel. When man is the highest recognized authority, and belief in God is more of an academic exercise than a way of life, the condition arises where that which is evil is called good and that which is good is called evil. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit does reside and prepare hearts to recognize Truth which points them to Christ. Some are attracted to Light, but cannot abide it for long.

Iron sharpens iron...

One of the blessings I have been given is the gift of devout men of various faiths as coworkers. Our beliefs vary and we do not always agree. However, the desire of each is to faithfully walk the path of our Master. It is a blessing to be able to pray for and encourage one another as struggles arise or temptations are faced and a stand must be taken.

Since our arrival, two other church families have moved to within 1½ hours of us and the Church of Jesus Christ, Southern Germany Restoration Branch, has been established. In addition, two ladies were baptized by John Mundy last October. While they live near Berlin – 6 hours away—it has been a blessing to work with them as they enter the gate and begin their individual and collective journeys.

The House of the Lord...

Our congregation sometimes meets in our home, but the conversion of a 200-year-old barn into a sanctuary takes more than adding chairs and Catherine playing hymns on the piano. We have been blessed by the presence of His Spirit as we have gathered to worship in Christ’s name. The greatest blessings we have been given are the testimonies that our presence in Germany is a result of our Father’s plan and provision. One aspect of this has been His sustenance through difficult and trying times.

Another blessing which has contributed to strengthening and encouraging us has been consistent family worship. Little can replace the time spent studying and praying together. The prayers, encouraging e-mails from our brothers and sisters in Oak Grove, and the sermons which the Normans have kept us well supplied with, have also been mightily used by our Father to lift us up and sustain our home as a sanctuary from the darkness.

Our struggles are no different than yours. Yet the relative isolation sometimes makes them seem darker and more ominous. At times like this it is a comfort to remember the words of Paul to the Ephesians when he admonished them to:

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” ~ Ephesians 6:11-13